

# Images of the Marquesas from the Krusenstern Expedition, 1804<sup>1</sup>

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The first Polynesian islands encountered by Europeans were the Marquesas Islands, Te Henua 'Enana. This occurred in 1595 when Alvaro de Mendaña, sailing under the patronage of the Viceroy of Peru, sighted Fatuiva, the southernmost island of the archipelago. Since this initial meeting, visitors have tried to capture in both words and graphic images, the fierce beauty of both Te Henua, the land, and Te 'Enana, the people.

One group of illustrations has captured the imagination of both Hao'e, non-Marquesans, and today, 'Enana themselves. These are the engravings published in the journals from an early nineteenth century Russian expedition to the Pacific, the Krusenstern expedition. No other images of the Marquesas have been reproduced more frequently, with or without modification, than these. They are an especially rich source of information about Marquesan life at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, and several among them, in particular, have continued to resonate through time.

This article places these illustrations within the context of others from the same historical period, and then traces their usage both outside and inside Te Henua 'Enana in the nearly two hundred years since. It will look at how both Marquesans and non-Marquesans have used, reworked and re-contextualized the images and will explore some reasons that might explain their continued popularity.

Though the Marquesas were known to Europeans since 1595, only five images from the Marquesas had been published before the Krusenstern journals began to appear in 1809. Since the Mendaña expedition account was not illustrated (Quiros 1904), the first visual images of the Marquesans are from their second encounter with Europeans, nearly 180 years later during the second circumnavigation of the British naval captain, James Cook. This was in April 1774 when Cook and his crew stopped at Vaitahu bay on Tahuata island. The expedition included William Hodges, a neo-classical landscape painter.

Four of his nine original works (Joppien and Smith 1985:202-207) were published as engravings in Cook's journal (Cook 1777 :Plates XXXIII, XXXVI, XXXVII and XVII). These include a view of canoes in Vaitahu bay; portraits of a Marquesan woman and Vaitahu's high chief, Honu; and a plate of artifacts, illustrating five of the first Marquesan pieces brought back to Europe: a partially carved club ('u'u), a fan (*tahi'i*), an *uhikana* head ornament, a fiber head ornament, and a wooden gorget studded with seeds.<sup>2</sup> The only other image from the Marquesas published before the Krusenstern journals comes from the account of the 1791 visit of Frenchman, Etienne Marchand. It illustrates a wooden stilt footrest (Fleurieu 1801).

In early May 1804, two Russian ships, the *Nadeshda* and the *Neva*, rendezvoused in Taioha'e bay, Nuku Hiva island, in the northern Marquesas. Under the command of Cap-

tain Adam John von Krusenstern, the expedition spent ten days exploring the southern coast of the island. It was the first Russian circumnavigation, and one of its many goals was to collect scientific data (Bernhardi 1856:19-24).

The ship's company included two astute and observant captains: Krusenstern himself, and Captain Urey Lisiansky; three scientists: German naturalists G. H. von Langsdorff and W. G. Tilesius von Tilenau, and Swiss astronomer, Hofrat Horner; and, to record the scene, an unnamed draftsman from the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. Tilesius, a medical doctor from Leipzig, was also, serendipitously, a fine artist. They were assisted in their work by two rival beachcombers, both of whom had lived in Te Henua 'Enana for some six years: Edward Robarts, a 25 year old deserter from a British whaler and Jean Cabri, a young Frenchman.

When they returned to Europe, Krusenstern, Lisiansky and Langsdorff published their journals in numerous editions and languages. Lisiansky published in Russian (1812) and English (1814), Langsdorff in German (1812), two different editions in English (1813-14, 1817), and in Dutch (1818-19). Between 1809 and 1821, the Krusenstern journal saw eight editions: Russian (1809), two in German (1810-14, 1811-12), Dutch (1811-15), Swedish (1811-12), English (1813), Italian (1818) and French (1821), in addition to a separate Atlas (1813). Included among these various editions were a total of some 30 engravings from the Marquesas of maps, birds, landscapes, artifacts, and people (see the list at the end of this article). All of the engravings in the Atlas, and many of the others, were originally sketched by Tilesius (Langsdorff 1813:xi).

Somewhat ironically, given their later history, not everyone at the time appreciated these engravings. Richard Belgrave Hoppner, the Briton who translated Krusenstern's journal into English, closes his preface by stating that he had not deemed it important to hold up publication of the journal to include the plates because, "...from the indifferent manner in which they are executed, and the very little information which they convey, the book has suffered no defect from the want of them" (Krusenstern 1813:vii).

After the Krusenstern journals, other accounts were published that included original illustrations, but the later accounts had few images, or were not as widely disseminated as the Russian expedition's had been. The most important of these were by David Porter (1815, 1822), Charles Stewart (1831), Jules Dumont d'Urville (1841), Max Radiguet (1929), and Aylic Marin [pseudonym of Edouard Petit] (1891). Engravings from these, as well as from Cook, have been reproduced, some many times, but not to the same extent as the Krusenstern ones. As early as the 1830s, they began to be reprinted in works by other authors. They have been used to illustrate books on the Pacific in general, on Marquesan history, mythology, and art, and in virtually every book on tattooing, Polynesian or Marquesan.

Sometimes, it seems, they begin to take on a life of their own. In some cases there are minor changes, while in others, they are quite extensively reworked or manipulated. Some artists didn't like the original background scenery, and so re-drew it. An example of this is a lithograph (A117, no. 6) from the 1840s in the print collection of the Turnbull Li-

brary, Wellington, New Zealand drawn by G. Riccio and etched by Petraroja. It is based on the frontispiece from Krusenstern's journal (1813, drawn and etched by J. A. Atkinson) showing a Marquesan warrior holding a club and a gourd in a net. Although the central image of the man is essentially unchanged, three people have been added to the scene and the hills and houses in landscape are different from the original.

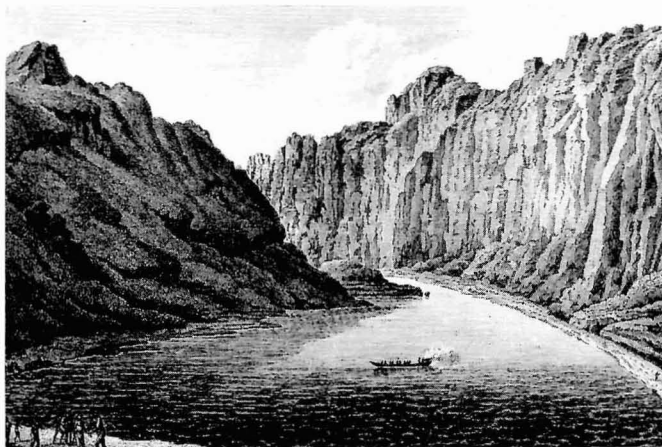


Figure 1. View of the Coast in the neighborhood of Tschitschagoff [Haka'ui] Harbour (Krusenstern Atlas 1813:Plate 14).

A good example of a book in which both major and minor modifications occurred is Domeny de Rienzi's, *Océanie*, published in 1836. This three-volume work was reprinted in the 1870s, with several of the Marquesan plates later reproduced by Dr. Louis Rollin (1929) in a book on Marquesan culture. Domeny de Rienzi's Volume 2 includes eight plates illustrating the Marquesas. Of these, five are derived from Krusenstern's Atlas, two mainly from Cook's account, and one is a melange combining images from Stewart, Porter and Krusenstern! One of the least reworked is the scene entitled, View of the Coast in the neighborhood of Tschitschagoff [Haka'ui] Harbour (Figure 1). In the Domeny de Rienzi version (Figure 2), the scale has been changed dramatically, with the foreground and the boat enlarged to take on greater importance.

Extensive changes can be seen in Morai (l'espece de



Figure 2. Baie de Tchitchogoff (Domeny de Rienzi 1865:Plate 136; in Rollin 1929:38).

Cimitiere) a Nouka-hiva (Figure 3), a re-working of Cemetery on Nukahiva Island (Figure 4). In this version of a sacred burial and ritual site called a *me'ae*, only two wooden figures remain from the three in the original Krusenstern engraving. There is a completely different landscape, with several volcanic peaks, a Western Polynesian style house, and two figures walking peacefully along a path.



Figure 3. Morai (l'espece de Cimitiere) a Nouka-hiva (Domeny de Rienzi 1865:Plate 138; in Rollin 1979:202).

An interesting example of transformation can be seen in the scene where a woman is being tattooed in her house, Inside of a Hut at Nukahiwa (Langsdorff 1813:Plate X, fp.127). In a color version from a recent book on tattooing, the scene is described as "a fantasized and toned down perception of a session of tattooing - 1813" (Gotz 1998:17). An even more "toned down" version was reproduced in a brochure for the Keikahanui Inn in Taioha'e, Nuku Hiva. The scene is described only as "the interior of a house of Nuku Hiva," and all vestiges of tattooing have been removed.

By far the two most popular images from the Krusenstern engravings are those of an "older" tattooed Marquesan, An Inhabitant of the Island of Nukahiwa (Figure 5) and a "younger" one, A Young Nukahivan not completely tattooed (Figure 6). In an often reprinted late nineteenth century publication, J. G. Wood's *Natural History of Man*, they actually

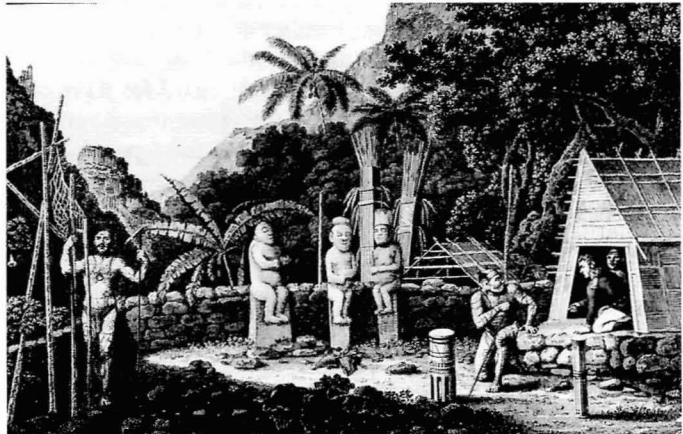


Figure 4. Cemetery on Nukahiva Island (Krusenstern Atlas 1813: Plate 16).



Figure 5. An Inhabitant of the Island of Nukahiva (Langsdorff 1813:Plate VI, fp.117)

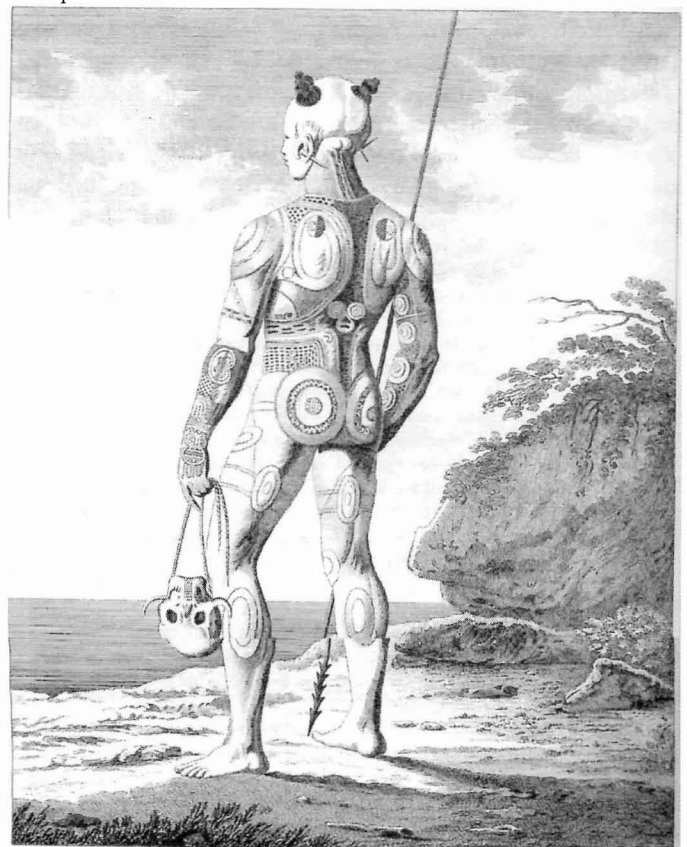


Figure 6. A Young Nukahivan not completely tattooed (Langsdorff 1813:Plate VII, fp.119).

meet in conversation. This engraving has been reproduced in a recent book on Marquesan myths (see Langridge and Terrell 1988: opp. 8). The older man is little changed except for being more relaxed. The younger man appears more animated than in the original. He's now wearing the *hami*, a tapa, or bark cloth, wrapping instead of being completely naked, and instead of a trophy skull and spear, he here holds a very Fijian-looking club.

In the 1920s, German ethnologist, Karl von den Steinen, who had spent six months in the Marquesas in 1897-1898, published his encyclopedic, three-volume work on Marquesan art, *Die Marquesaner und Ihrer Kunst* (1925, 1928a, b). In his books, he reproduced a large number of illustrations drawn from many sources. These include most of the original Krusenstern engravings. Perhaps his high regard for them can be deduced from the fact that three Krusenstern images are the only ones for which he allots a full page each (1925:30,70,142), and two of the three are the older and younger men.

Steinen's books are extremely important for many reasons, but the one that is significant for this essay is that they have had an enormous impact on art in the Marquesas islands, especially since the mid-1970s, when pages from them began to be photocopied and widely distributed in notebooks throughout the Marquesan islands. Along with drawings from a second scholar, Willowdean Handy (1922, 1938), they form the design books for most contemporary sculpture and tattoo artists, and in the form of paper patterns, for contemporary

tapa (barkcloth) makers from Fatuiva.

The tapa makers, in particular, routinely use the historical drawings found in Steinen. These designs are preserved in the form of treasured family-owned paper patterns, a notable example of Hao'e-'Enana exchange. Outsiders, Hao'e, drew the original pictures of 'Enana in the nineteenth century. In the 1970s, these images returned to the Marquesas as photocopies. Beginning in the 1980s, it was foreigners who drew the paper patterns that their Marquesan friends use to this day to make tapa, which they then sell to tourists! An interesting note is that a number of Marquesan tapa artists remarked to me that they liked the contemporary version of the "old warrior" better than the original. The reason is that his face was changed when the pattern was made, making him, they say, much more handsome.

Of all of the historical images available, the young warrior is by far the single most popular subject on painted tapa (Figure 7). The artists often have multiple patterns of him in a variety of sizes. One reason for his popularity is, of course, because he sells well. Tourists, outsiders, love him, but Te 'Enana do also. When I asked some ten women which tapa designs were their own personal favorites, almost all mentioned the young warrior.

He has, in fact, become THE icon of the Marquesan past, for many Marquesans and non-Marquesans. As an example of the latter, he was the logo for Rose Corser's Keikahanui Inn, which is now the Nuku Hiva Keikahanui Pearl Lodge, part of a luxury hotel chain in French Polynesia. Keikahanui was a



legendary hero figure and great warrior from Hatiheu valley, on the other side of Nuku Hiva island from Taioha'e, where the hotel is located. The site where the young warrior stands in the original drawing is, however, coincidentally in reality on the beach just below the hotel grounds. In 1979, Corser adopted both the legendary hero's name, as well as the image of the young warrior, whom she calls Keikahaniui, to symbolize her hotel.

He appears in other brochures, too, such as those from a packet promoting the Marquesas Islands as a tourist destination that was published in the late 1990s. These brochures were designed by a consortium of Marquesan and non-Marquesan business and political leaders. Again, a piece of tapa depicting the young warrior was chosen from the wide variety of tapa designs available. This image is reproduced in the packet twice, both to illustrate the brochure on Fatuiva, and in the general introductory one.

Why the fondness for this image? I believe this particular figure resonates on multiple levels. When one thinks of the Marquesas of the past, one might well picture someone like this man: young, with a sense of potential, of possibilities; a warrior who traditionally was brave and strong. He is also anonymous; we don't see his face or know who he is – he could be anyone. His mood is ambiguous – pensively looking out over the harbor. Is he melancholy, looking to a lost past, which is certainly the case in the Marquesas, or with hope, to a new future with a renewed and revitalized Marquesan culture? This is also true of the Marquesas today. This potential for different interpretations and moods is, I believe, an important reason for the popularity of this particular figure today.

As for the sustained interest in the Krusenstern engravings as a group, I think a number of reasons may be considered. For one thing, there are not many published historical images available to draw from – perhaps 50 or 60 nineteenth century engravings. Of these, the Krusenstern group forms about 60% of them, and the prominence that Steinen gave to them helped bring them back to the attention of people inside and outside the Marquesas in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Despite Hoppner's claim that the Krusenstern plates conveyed very little information, they in fact are a rich treasure trove for scholars and artists, Marquesan and non-

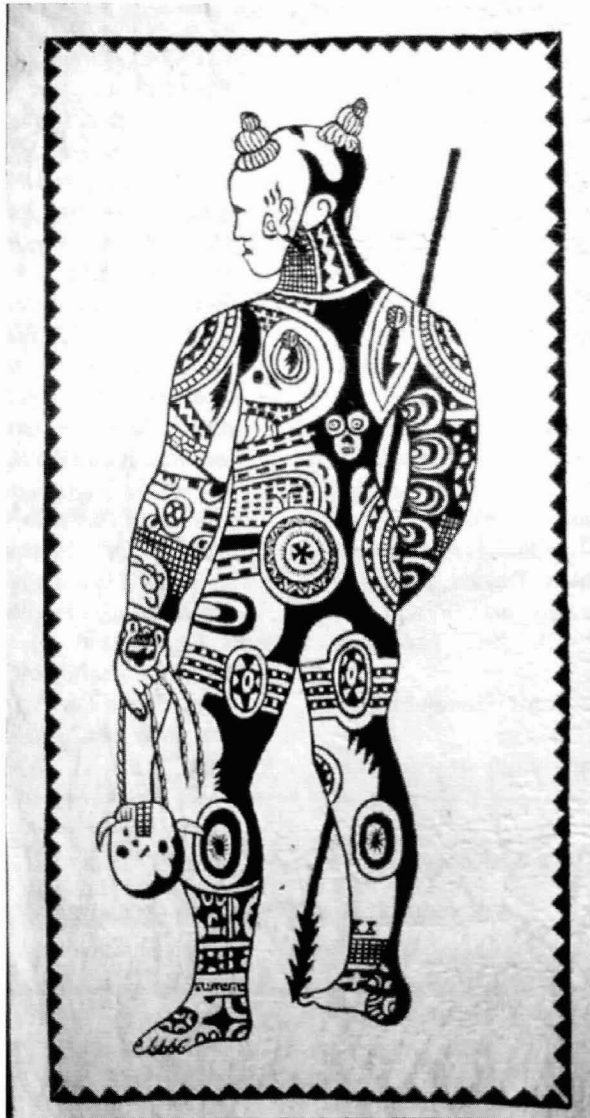


Figure 7. Tapa by Elisabeth Gilmore showing the 'young warrior'. (Photo by Carol Ivory)

Marquesan. Their subject matter is diverse and can be used as illustrations for a variety of purposes. They are really the first to record Marquesan life, and especially subjects such as tattooing, which particularly fascinated outsiders.

And they captured Marquesan life at a moment before it had radically changed. Radiguet's drawings from 1842 are wonderful, and have been featured in two recent publications on the Marquesas (Panoff 1995, Deschamps and Laudon 1994, 2002), but they depict a culture in the throes of change and at a significant, and difficult moment in Marquesan history, the accession of the archipelago by the French. It is interesting that these images have not resonated among Marquesans to any extent at all at this time. It seems certain that the Krusenstern engravings will retain their prominence of place for a long time to come. They are richly deserving of the attention and further study.

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> The club is believed to be in the British Museum, no. BM11; the other artifacts are identical to several in the Forster collection now at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

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